

and by March 1942 applied for training at Pratt and Whitney, enlisting as one of the iconic, "Rosie the Riveters."

Beginning at age 19, Sophie picked up 6 shifts a week as a drill press operator and then turret lathe through to the end of the war. Equipped with the symbolism of the all-too-known uniform—the blue overalls, head turban, and her own toolbox—Sophie was one of the Homefront heroes our nation relied upon during the war. Many of us in this chamber know that Allied Forces won the war due to the United States' ability to outproduce the Axis Powers. That is in thanks to citizens like Sophie.

The importance of Sophie's service at Pratt and Whitney cannot be overstated. That is why a part of her story is already archived in the World War II Home Front National Park Museum. However, we also ought to recognize Sophie's diligence in her profession, which instilled even further within her a value for hard work and an ability to address challenging situations. By 1946, the year following the conclusion of the war, Sophie returned to Pratt's engineering office to fill out those values. She, like many after the war, also began to settle into a new post-war life and met her would-be-husband, Mitchell L. Pabis, who also served overseas in Germany. They married in 1948. It was only when they began expecting their children that Sophie took time off from Pratt & Whitney. Together, they raised their two sons, Mitchell and Richard, and remained happily married until Mitchell Senior's unfortunate passing in 2001.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to bring attention to Sophie's immense community presence throughout her life. For example, she has volunteered at Saint Adelbert's School library and served as a Eucharistic Minister at Saint Adelbert's Church, worked with the Little Sisters of the Poor, and has been a member of the American Legion John Maciolek Unit 154 Auxiliary for 75 years.

On March 13, 2023, Sophie will celebrate her 100th birthday. Sophie truly does belong to the Greatest Generation, and we can all take from her example. I am beyond honored to represent constituents of such quality. To that end, I ask my colleagues to join me in celebrating her incredible, continuing life by recognizing this milestone of hers.

RECOGNIZING TAMPA BAY'S
LOCAL TRAILBLAZER,
BRIDGETTE HELLER, IN HONOR
OF BLACK HISTORY MONTH

HON. KATHY CASTOR

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 7, 2023

Ms. CASTOR of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I rise today during Black History Month to celebrate a change agent and one of Tampa Bay's most accomplished businesswomen, Ms. Bridgette Heller. Ms. Heller was born and raised in St. Petersburg, Fla. She attended segregated schools through elementary school, but credits success during her formative years to being raised by a village of love that had very high standards for her. She achieved a higher education at Northwestern University, earning a bachelor's degree, then master's from the Kellogg Graduate School of Management. Ms.

Heller continues to contribute to her alma mater serving on the University's Board of Trustees and mentoring the next generation of business leaders.

After graduating from Northwestern University, Ms. Heller spent more than 35 years serving in leadership positions in numerous Fortune 100 companies and private equity-owned enterprises, such as Johnson & Johnson, Merck, Danone and Kraft Foods, where she worked for more than 18 years. While serving as executive vice president of Merck and president of its consumer care division, she led an organization of approximately 2,400 employees and helped the company expand across the globe. In honor of all her many accomplishments in the business world, Ms. Heller was named one of The 50 Most Powerful Black Women in Business by Black Enterprise Magazine, a Women to Watch by Advertising Age, and Healthcare Businesswomen's Association Women of the Year. She also founded her own consulting firm and has served as a corporate director for numerous companies.

Ms. Heller is an advocate for diversity, equity and inclusion, and has traveled the world to reinforce infant and maternal health, inclusive C-suite for women, and sustainable communities. She is a co-founder and CEO of the Shirley Proctor Puller Foundation (SPPF), named in honor of her mother. Under her leadership, the SPPF established the MASTR kids program, initially focused on helping to minimize the summer learning loss students experience in between terms. The program achieved remarkable results—80 percent of the students enrolled avoided the summer slide, and three quarters experienced gains in their math and reading proficiencies.

Ms. Heller also continues to give back to her community by helping the youth of south St. Petersburg bridge the achievement and literacy gaps. Her work has allowed countless students to advance their education in STEM fields and improve both their math and reading aptitude. She has worked tirelessly to achieve her long-term goal of improving the educational experience and outcomes—raising high school and college graduation rates, which will lead to better economic opportunities, and a more prosperous St. Petersburg.

Ms. Heller serves on the board of The Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg, working to provide equity and prosperity to her community, treating not just the symptoms of inequality, but creating a community built to benefit all. By providing both project funding and training sessions, she gives those in her community the tools to improve their lives and fuel innovation.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Tampa Bay community, I am honored to recognize the outstanding accomplishments, leadership and service of Ms. Bridgette Heller, who stands as a shining example of the tremendous impact of hard work, nurturing others and service to the community to encourage others to reach their highest potential.

RECOGNIZING THE LIFE OF
LAUREN VERDICH

HON. MIKE QUIGLEY

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 7, 2023

Mr. QUIGLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the life of LGBTQ activist, community advocate, and friend Lauren Verdich.

During the mid-1980s, Lauren became part of a group of volunteers at the AIDS Memorial Quilt Display at Navy Pier who came together to provide hot meals to homebound Chicagoans with HIV/AIDS. She helped to found Open Hand, an organization which served meals to people impacted by HIV/AIDS, and which still lives on today as part of Heartland Health Alliance.

She pursued her passion for cooking by starting Lauren's Catering in 1986, donating tens of thousands of dollars' worth of goods and services to nonprofits over the years. She was a founding member of the Chicago Area Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, founded in 1995. To honor all of her achievements, Verdich was inducted into Chicago's LGBT Hall of Fame in 2015.

I was honored to have her join my LGBT Advisory Committee and help educate me on the needs of the LGBT community in my district. She was a strong force, a fearless advocate and a friend who will be missed.

She is survived by her spouse Gail Morse; son Jordan Wolski and their son Zachery Wolski; daughter Dana Bennett; sisters Roberta Heinrich, Andrea Reich and Linda Mankoff; brother Steven Isaacson; loving nieces and nephews; countless friends and those whose lives she touched.

HONORING DR. NORA GOUGH-
DAVIS

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 7, 2023

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor a tenacious and self-motivated leader, Dr. Nora Gough-Davis. Dr. Nora Gough-Davis has had a fascination for the medical field since she was young, watching her dad, the late Dr. Walter C. Gough, tirelessly serve the rural MS Delta.

Dr. Gough-Davis is a native of Mound Bayou, MS. She is also the daughter of Mrs. May Bailey Gough. She received a B.S. in Biology and Chemistry from Mississippi Valley State University (MVSU) in 1999, graduating as Valedictorian of her class. During her academic years at MVSU, Dr. Gough-Davis was a Presidential Scholar for all four academic years, a member of the Mississippi Alliance for Minority Participation (MAMP), Beta Kappa Chi Honor Society, the Women's Basketball Team, and the Eta Alpha Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

Upon graduating from MVSU, Dr. Gough-Davis began a career as a science and pre-algebra teacher, girls' basketball assistant coach and girls' softball head coach for the North Bolivar School District. In 2003, the girls' basketball team achieved their first Girls' State 2A Basketball Championship.